

THE WEATHER IN NEW ZEALAND IN MARCH 1987

General—March was colder and wetter than normal over much of the country. South-west winds prevailed over the north of the North Island, and northwesterlies predominated over the south of New Zealand. Northwesterlies were more frequent than usual over the South Island. Mean sea level pressures were below normal over the whole of New Zealand, especially in Gisborne, where they were nearly 5 hPa down. Southerly gales caused the disruption of Cook Strait rail-ferry services on the 4th.

Rainfall—Heavy rainfall in the Central Otago and Southland high country caused flooding of rivers in these regions on the 10th and 11th. Due to the threat of flooding in Otautau and Mataura a state of civil emergency was declared, and 2300 people were evacuated. Flooding later occurred at Invercargill Airport when stopbanks collapsed. Water was reported to cover the floor in the terminal building to a depth of 0.5 metres.

Heavy rain also affected Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Hawke Bay later in the month. In the 24 hours to 9 a.m. on the 22nd a total of 98 mm was recorded at Hamilton Airport, and 109 mm at Napier Airport.

An extremely heavy rainfall, of approximately 560 mm was recorded in the 48 hours to 9 a.m. on the 31st at Milford Sound.

Rainfall totals for the month were well above normal in many eastern regions of the country. At Mount John four times the normal March rainfall was recorded. It was also wetter than usual in most other regions, except Northland, Buller and Westland.

Temperature—Over much of New Zealand mean daily temperatures were 0.5 to 1.5°C below normal. In inland Canterbury the mean daily maximum temperature was as much as 3°C below the normal for March. At Kelburn, Wellington the mean daily maximum temperature was the lowest since 1974, and third lowest since records began in 1928.

Temperatures were near normal in South Westland, Fiordland, and Southland.

Sunshine—Hours of bright sunshine varied over the country, being above normal from Waikato northwards and in Westland, and below normal in Manawatu, Wellington, eastern regions of the North Island, and in Southland. Sunshine hours were only 70 to 80 percent of normal in Wairarapa and on the Kaikoura Coast.

J. S. HICKMAN, Director.